

CRS Report for Congress

Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

Updated July 10, 2008

Jim Nichol
Specialist in Russian and Central Asian Affairs
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division



Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 10 JUL 2008		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Congressional Research Service Library of Congress 101 Independence Ave, SE Washington, DC 20540-7500				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The original document contains color images.					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 45	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States recognized the independence of all the former Central Asian republics, supported their admission into Western organizations, and elicited Turkish support to counter Iranian influence in the region. Congress was at the forefront in urging the formation of coherent U.S. policies for aiding these and other Eurasian states of the former Soviet Union.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian states offered overflight and other support to coalition anti-terrorist efforts in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also endorsed coalition military action in Iraq, and Kazakhstan provided about two dozen troops for rebuilding. U.S. policy has emphasized bolstering the security of the Central Asian “front-line” states to help them combat terrorism, proliferation, and arms trafficking. Other U.S. objectives have included promoting free markets, democratization, human rights, energy development, and the forging of east-west and Central Asia-South Asia trade and transport linkages. Such policies aim to help the states become what the Administration considers to be responsible members of the international community rather than to degenerate into xenophobic, extremist, and anti-Western regimes that threaten international peace and stability.

The Administration’s diverse goals in Central Asia have reflected the differing characteristics of these states. U.S. interests in Kazakhstan have included securing and eliminating Soviet-era nuclear and biological weapons materials and facilities. U.S. energy firms have invested in oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Economic and democratic reforms and border security have been among U.S. concerns in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, U.S. aid has focused on economic reconstruction following that country’s 1992-1997 civil war. U.S. relations with Uzbekistan suffered following the Uzbek government’s violent crackdown on armed and unarmed protesters in the city of Andijon in May 2005.

The second session of the 110th Congress is likely to continue to be at the forefront in advocating increased U.S. ties with Central Asia, and in providing backing for use of the region as a staging area for supporting U.S.-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Congress is likely to pursue these goals through hearings and legislation on humanitarian assistance, economic development, security issues, human rights, and democratization. The July 2006 U.S.-Kyrgyzstan agreement on the continued U.S. use of airbase facilities in Kyrgyzstan included U.S. pledges of boosted foreign assistance and other compensation, which are subject to regular congressional appropriations and oversight. Assistance for border and customs controls and other safeguards to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will likely be ongoing congressional concerns. Congress will continue to consider whether and how to balance its concerns about human rights abuses and lagging democratization against other U.S. interests in continued engagement with the region to advance energy security and prosecute the Global War on Terror.

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Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

Most Recent Developments

Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on June 29, 2008, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized that his country was contributing to global energy and food security by virtue of its major oil and gas resources and its corn and grain production. He stated that Kazakhstan was ready to trade these assets for Western technology and investments. He also stated that the OSCE's decision in late 2007 that Kazakhstan would chair the organization in 2010 had spurred the elaboration of a blueprint he termed "the path to Europe," which envisages Kazakhstan's integration with Europe in the areas of energy, transport, technology transfers, education, culture, and democratization. He pledged efforts to foster a multiparty system, a multiparty legislature, and free media, but stressed that the country would pursue a "Kazakh form" of democratization in tune with cultural values.

Central Asia: Basic Facts
Total Area: 1.6 million sq. mi., larger than India; Kazakhstan: 1.1 m. sq. mi.; Kyrgyzstan: 77,000 sq. mi.; Tajikistan: 55,800 sq. mi.; Turkmenistan: 190,000 sq. mi.; Uzbekistan: 174,500 sq. mi.
Total Population: 61.36 million, slightly less than France; Kazakhstan: 15.34 m.; Kyrgyzstan: 5.36 m.; Tajikistan: 7.21 m.; Turkmenistan: 5.18 m.; Uzbekistan: 28.27 m. (July 2008 est., <i>The World Factbook</i>).
Total Gross Domestic Product: \$293.39 billion in 2007; per capita GDP is about \$4,800, but there are large income disparities and relatively large percentages of people in each country are in poverty. Kazakhstan: \$161.5 b.; Kyrgyzstan: \$10.38 b.; Tajikistan: \$11.87 b.; Turkmenistan: \$47.37 b.; Uzbekistan: \$62.27 b. (<i>The World Factbook</i> , purchasing power parity).

Historical Background

Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; it borders Russia, China, the Middle East, and South Asia. The major peoples of all but Tajikistan speak Turkic languages (the Tajiks speak an Iranian language); and most are Sunni Muslims (some Tajiks are Shiia Muslims). Most are closely related historically and culturally. By the late 19th century, Russian tsars had conquered the last independent khanates and nomadic lands of Central Asia. By the early 1920s, Soviet power had been imposed; by 1936, five "Soviet Socialist

Republics” had been created. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, they gained independence.¹

Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, then-President George H.W. Bush sent the “FREEDOM Support Act” (FSA) aid authorization to Congress, which was amended and signed into law in October 1992 (P.L. 102-511). In 1999, congressional concerns led to passage of the “Silk Road Strategy Act” (P.L. 106-113), which authorized enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

U.S. policymakers and others hold various views on the appropriate types and levels of U.S. involvement in the region. Some have argued that ties with “energy behemoth” Kazakhstan are crucial to U.S. interests.² At least until recently, others have argued that Uzbekistan is the “linchpin” of the region (it is the most populous regional state and is centrally located, shaping the range and scope of regional cooperation) and should receive the most U.S. attention.

In general, U.S. aid and investment have been viewed as strengthening the independence of the Central Asian states and forestalling Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or other efforts to subvert them. Advocates of such ties have argued that political turmoil and the growth of terrorist enclaves in Central Asia could produce spillover effects both in nearby states, including U.S. allies and friends such as Turkey, and worldwide. They also have argued that the United States has a major interest in preventing terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring Soviet-era technology for making weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They have maintained that U.S. interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its allies and friends, that Turkey and other actors possess limited aid resources, and that the United States is in the strongest position as the sole superpower to influence democratization and respect for human rights. They have stressed that such U.S. influence will help alleviate social tensions exploited by Islamic extremist groups to gain adherents. They also have argued that for all these reasons, the United States should maintain military access to the region even when Afghanistan becomes more stable. At least some of these views appear to be reflected in the Administration’s most recent *National*

¹ See CRS Report 97-1058, *Kazakhstan*; CRS Report 97-690, *Kyrgyzstan*; CRS Report 98-594, *Tajikistan*; CRS Report 97-1055, *Turkmenistan*; and CRS Report RS21238, *Uzbekistan*, all by Jim Nichol.

² U.S. Department of State. Office of the Spokesman. *Remarks: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice At Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Perhaps indicative of the boosted emphasis on U.S. interests in Kazakhstan, Secretary Rice argued that the country has the potential to be the “engine for growth” in Central Asia.

Security Strategy of the United States, which proclaims that “Central Asia is an enduring priority for our foreign policy.”³

Some views of policymakers and academics who previously objected to a more forward U.S. policy toward Central Asia appeared less salient after September 11, 2001, but aspects of these views could gain more credence if Afghanistan becomes more stable. These observers argued that the United States historically had few interests in this region and that developments there remained largely marginal to U.S. interests. They discounted fears that anti-Western Islamic extremism would make enough headway to threaten secular regimes or otherwise harm U.S. interests. At least until the coup in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 (see below, *Democratization*), these observers argued that the United States should not try to foster democratization among cultures they claimed are historically attuned to authoritarianism. Some observers reject arguments that U.S. interests in anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional cooperation, and trade outweigh concerns over democratization and human rights, and urge reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive states. A few observers point to instability in the region as a reason to eschew deeper U.S. involvement such as military access that might needlessly place more U.S. personnel and citizens in danger.

Appearing to indicate a more negative assessment of developmental prospects in Central Asia, the Deputy Director of National Intelligence, Thomas Fingar, testified to Congress in July 2007 that “there is no guarantee that elite and societal turmoil across Central Asia would stay within the confines of existing autocratic systems. In the worst, but not implausible case, central authority in one or more of these states could be challenged, leading to potential for increased terrorist and criminal activities.”⁴ However, in February 2008, the Director of National Intelligence, J. Michael McConnell, seemed to de-emphasize these threats, stating that “Central Asia remains fertile ground for radical Islamic sentiment and movements, due to socioeconomic and other factors,” but appearing to evaluate the regional governments as presently stable.⁵

Post-September 11 and Afghanistan. Since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the Administration has stated that U.S. policy toward Central Asia focuses on the promotion of security, domestic reforms, and energy development. According to then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe in testimony in June 2002, the September 11 attacks led the Administration to realize that “it was critical to the national interests of the United States that we greatly enhance our relations with the five Central Asian countries” to prevent them

³ The White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 16, 2006, p. 40.

⁴ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Armed Services. *Global Security Assessment: Testimony by Deputy Director of National Intelligence, Thomas Fingar*, July 11, 2007.

⁵ U.S. Senate. Select Committee on Intelligence. *Annual Threat Assessment: Testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, J. Mitchell McConnell*, February 5, 2008.

from becoming harbors for terrorism.⁶ After September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian states soon offered overflight and other assistance to U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition operations in Afghanistan. The states were predisposed to welcome such operations. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance's combat against the Taliban, and all the Central Asian states feared Afghanistan as a base for terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking (even Turkmenistan, which tried to reach some accommodation with the Taliban). In 2005, however, Uzbekistan rescinded its basing agreement with the United States. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have maintained their basing support for NATO peacekeeping operations — and Kyrgyzstan has continued its basing support for U.S. operations — in Afghanistan (see also below, *Security*).

Support for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state that joined the “coalition of the willing” in February-March 2003 that endorsed prospective U.S.-led coalition military operations in Iraq (Kazakhstan joined later). Uzbekistan subsequently decided not to send troops to Iraq, but Kazakhstan has deployed some two dozen troops to Iraq who reportedly do not take part in combat operations. Some observers in Central Asia have raised concerns about the deaths of Muslim civilians in Iraq.

Fostering Pro-Western Orientations

The United States has encouraged the Central Asian states to become responsible members of the international community, supporting integrative goals through bilateral aid and through coordination with other aid donors. The stated policy goal is to discourage radical anti-democratic regimes and terrorist groups from gaining influence. All the Central Asian leaders publicly embrace Islam but display hostility toward Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, they have established some trade and aid ties with Iran. Although they have had greater success in attracting development aid from the West than from the East, some observers argue that, in the longer run, their foreign policies may not be anti-Western but may more closely reflect some concerns of other Islamic states. Some Western organizational ties with the region have suffered in recent years, in particular those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has been criticized by some Central Asian governments for advocating democratization and respect for human rights.⁷ Despite this criticism, President Nazarbayev successfully pushed for Kazakhstan to hold the presidency of the OSCE (see below).

The State Department in 2006 included Central Asia in a revamped Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. According to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Mann, “institutions such as NATO and the OSCE will continue to draw the nations of Central Asia closer to Europe and the United States,” but the

⁶ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The U.S. Role in Central Asia. *Testimony of B. Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs*, June 27, 2002.

⁷ See also CRS Report RL30294, *Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

United States also will encourage the states to develop “new ties and synergies with nations to the south,” such as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.⁸ Secretary Rice emphasized these ties when she heralded Kazakhstan’s role as part of “a new Silk Road, a great corridor of reform linking the provinces of northern Russia to the ports of South Asia, the republics of Western Europe to the democracies of East Asia.”⁹ In May 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged Asian countries to provide Central Asia with road and rail, telecommunications, and electricity generation and distribution aid to link the region with Asia; to help it combat terrorism and narcotics trafficking; to send technical advisors to ministries to promote political and economic reforms; to offer more military trainers, peacekeepers, and advisors for defense reforms; and to more actively integrate the regional states into “the Asian security structure.”¹⁰ (See also below, *Trade*.)

The European Union (EU) has become more interested in Central Asia in recent years as the region has become more of a security threat as an originator and transit zone for drugs, weapons of mass destruction, refugees, and persons smuggled for prostitution or labor. Russia’s cutoff of gas supplies to Ukraine in early 2006 also bolstered EU interest in Central Asia as an alternative supplier of oil and gas. Such interests contributed to the launch of a Strategy Paper for assistance for 2002-2006 and a follow-on for 2007-2013 (see below), and the EU’s appointment of a Special Representative to the region. The EU has implemented Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs, which set forth political, economic, and trade relations) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. An existing Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) program was supplemented in 2004 and 2006 by a Baku Energy Initiative to diversify energy supplies. One project involves the proposed Nabucco pipeline, which could transport Caspian region gas to Austria.¹¹

In June 2007, the EU approved a new “Central Asian strategy” for enhanced aid and relations for 2007-2013. It calls for establishing offices in each regional state and assistance of \$1 billion over the next five years. The strategy argues that the EU ties with the region need to be enhanced because EU enlargement and EU relations

⁸ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia. *Testimony of Steven Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs*, July 25, 2006. The State Department has appointed a Senior Advisor on Regional Integration in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Deutsch, who has focused on bolstering trade and transport ties between South and Central Asia.

⁹ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Some observers in Russia maintain that the State Department is encouraging ties between South and Central Asia in an effort to reduce Russia’s influence in Central Asia. *CEDR*, January 23, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-436006.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Documents. *International Institute for Strategic Studies - Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates*, Singapore, June 1, 2007.

¹¹ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union’s Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also European Union. “The EU and the Countries of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions Agree on a Common Energy Strategy,” *Press Release*, November 30, 2006.

with the South Caucasus and Black Sea states bring it to Central Asia's borders. The strategy also stresses that "the dependency of the EU on external energy sources and the need for a diversified energy supply policy in order to increase energy security open further perspectives for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia," and that the "EU will conduct an enhanced regular energy dialogue" with the states.¹² (See also below, *Oil and Natural Gas Resources*.)

Russia's Role

During most of the 1990s, U.S. administrations generally viewed a democratizing Russia as serving as a role model in Central Asia. Despite growing authoritarian tendencies in Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), the Bush Administration has emphasized that Russia's counter-terrorism efforts in the region broadly support U.S. interests. At the same time, the United States long has stressed to Russia that it should not seek to dominate the region or exclude Western and other involvement. Virtually all U.S. analysts agree that Russia's actions should be monitored to ensure that the independence of the Central Asian states is not threatened.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Russia acquiesced to increased U.S. and coalition presence in the region for operations against Al Qaeda and its supporters in Afghanistan. Besides Russia's own concerns about Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Central Asia, it was interested in boosting its economic and other ties to the West and regaining some influence in Afghanistan. More recently, however, Russia has appeared to step up efforts to counter U.S. influence in Central Asia by advocating that the states increase economic and strategic ties with Russia and limit such ties with the United States. Such a stance appears paradoxical to some observers, since Russia (and China) benefit from anti-terrorism operations carried out by U.S. (and NATO) forces in Afghanistan.

During the 1990s, Russia's economic decline and demands by Central Asia caused it to reduce its security presence, a trend that Vladimir Putin appeared determined to reverse during his presidency (2000-2008). In 1999, Russian border guards were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan, the last Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty (CST; see below) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in part because the treaty members failed to help Uzbekistan meet the growing Taliban threat in Afghanistan, according to Uzbek President Islam Karimov. However, Russia has appeared determined to maintain a military presence in Tajikistan. It long retained about 14,500 Federal Border Guards in Tajikistan, most of whom were Tajik conscripts, and 7,800 Russian troops of the 201st motorized rifle division.¹³

¹² European Community. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the Period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12.

¹³ *The Military Balance 2005-2006*. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2005.

Russia's efforts to formalize a basing agreement with Tajikistan dragged on for years, as Tajikistan endeavored to maximize rents and assert its sovereignty. In October 2004, the basing agreement was signed, formalizing Russia's largest military presence abroad, besides its Black Sea Fleet. At the same time, Tajikistan demanded full control over border policing. Russia announced in June 2005 that it had handed over the last guard-house along the Afghan-Tajik border to Tajik troops. Reportedly, some Russian "advisory" border troops remain. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon (or Rakhmonov) and others emphasize that growing drug production and trafficking from Afghanistan pose increasing challenges.¹⁴

In a seeming shift toward a more activist role in Central Asia, in April 2000, Russia called for the members of the CST to approve the creation of rapid reaction forces to combat terrorism and hinted that such forces might launch pre-emptive strikes on Afghan terrorist bases. These hints elicited U.S. calls for Russia to exercise restraint and consult the U.N. Presidents Clinton and Putin agreed in 2000 to set up a working group to examine Afghan-related terrorism (this working group now examines global terrorism issues). CST members agreed in 2001 to set up the Central Asian rapid reaction force headquartered in Kyrgyzstan, with Russia's troops in Tajikistan comprising most of the force. CIS members in 2001 also approved setting up an Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) in Moscow, with a branch in Kyrgyzstan, giving Russia influence over regional intelligence gathering.

Perhaps to counteract the U.S.-led military coalition presence in Kyrgyzstan established after the September 11, 2001, attacks (see below), Russia in September 2003 signed a 15-year military basing accord with Kyrgyzstan providing access to the Kant airfield, near Kyrgyzstan's capital of Bishkek. More than two dozen Russian aircraft and several hundred troops at the base also serve as part of the Central Asian rapid reaction force. The base is a few miles from the U.S.-led coalition's airbase. Besides its military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Russia has also asserted its maritime dominance in the Caspian Sea. Russia's Caspian Sea Flotilla has been bolstered by troops and equipment.

Taking advantage of Uzbekistan's souring relations with many Western countries (see below), Russia signed a Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005 that calls for mutual defense consultations in the event of a threat to either party (similar to language in the CST). Uzbekistan re-joined the CST in June 2006, consolidating its strategic security ties with Russia. The member-states of the CST agreed in June 2006 that basing agreements by any member with a third party had to be approved by all members, in effect providing supreme veto power to Russia over future basing arrangements.

¹⁴ U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, August 2007. UNODC warned that opium production in 2007 set a record and that Afghanistan is now the source of 93% of the world's opiates. UNODC estimated that about one-fifth of Afghan-produced morphine and heroin transit Central Asia. For another assessment, see U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities. *Testimony of Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs*, April 26, 2006. Of the tiny percentage of Afghan drugs that reach U.S. consumers, most do not appear to be smuggled through Central Asia.

Pointing to the deterioration of U.S.-Uzbek ties, many observers suggest that the appreciative attitude of Central Asian states toward the United States — for their added security accomplished through U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan — has declined over time. Reasons may include perceptions that the United States has not provided adequate security or economic assistance and growing concerns among the authoritarian leaders that the United States advocates democratic “revolutions” to replace them. Also, Russia and China are pledging security support to the states to get them to forget their pre-September 11, 2001, dissatisfaction with Russian and Chinese efforts. Russia also encourages the leaders to believe that the United States backs democratic “revolutions” to replace them.

Russia’s economic interests in Central Asia are being reasserted as its economy improves and may constitute its most effective lever of influence. Russia seeks to counter Western business and gain substantial influence over energy resources through participation in joint ventures and by insisting that pipelines cross Russian territory. After an Energy Cooperation Statement was signed at the May 2002 U.S.-Russia summit, it appeared that Russia would accept a Western role in the Caspian region, including construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. Subsequently, however, Russian officials urged the Central Asian states to rely on Russian-controlled export routes (see below, *Energy Resources*). A U.S.-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration signed by President Bush and then-President Putin in Sochi, Russia, in April 2008 calls for the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Energy to discuss cooperation “to enhance energy security and diversity of energy supplies through economically viable routes and means of transport.”¹⁵

Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts

The legacies of co-mingled ethnic groups, convoluted borders, and emerging national identities pose challenges to stability in all the Central Asian states. Emerging national identities accentuate clan, family, regional, and Islamic self-identifications. Central Asia’s convoluted borders fail to accurately reflect ethnic distributions and are hard to police, hence contributing to regional tensions. Ethnic Uzbeks make up sizeable minorities in the other Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. In Tajikistan, they make up almost a quarter of the population. More ethnic Turkmen reside in Iran and Afghanistan — over three million — than in Turkmenistan. Sizeable numbers of ethnic Tajiks reside in Uzbekistan, and seven million in Afghanistan. Many Kyrgyz and Tajiks live in China’s Xinjiang province. The fertile Ferghana Valley is shared by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The central governments have struggled to gain control over administrative subunits. Most observers agree that the term “Central Asia” currently denotes a geographic area more than a region of shared identities and aspirations, although it is clear that the land-locked, poverty-stricken, and sparsely-populated region will need more integration in order to develop.

¹⁵ The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *US-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration*, April 6, 2008.

Regional cooperation remains stymied by tensions among the states. Such tensions continue to exist despite the membership of the states in various cooperation groups such as the CST Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP). The CST was signed by Russia, Belarus, the South Caucasus countries, and the Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) in May 1992 and called for military cooperation and joint consultations in the event of security threats to any member. At the time to renew the treaty in 1999, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan formally withdrew. The remaining members formed the CST Organization (CSTO) in late 2002, and a secretariat opened in Moscow at the beginning of 2004. Through the CSTO, Russia has attempted to involve the members in joint support for the Central Asian rapid reaction forces and joint efforts to combat international terrorism and drug trafficking.¹⁶

In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed the "Shanghai treaty" with China pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of mutual borders, and in 1997 they signed a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,300 mile former Soviet-Chinese border. China has used the treaty to pressure the Central Asian states to deter their ethnic Uighur minorities from supporting separatism in China's Xinjiang province, and to get them to extradite Uighurs fleeing China. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the group, re-named the SCO, and in 2003 the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) was set up there. Military exercises have become a major form of cooperation, with the most recent — involving some 5,000 troops — taking place in August 2007 in southern Russia and northwestern China. According to some observers, a major aim of these "anti-terrorism" exercises is to convince the Central Asian states that Russia and China are able to supplant the United States in helping the region to combat terrorism. China also has stressed economic cooperation with the region to build east-west transport routes, and these efforts may mark some significant progress toward regional integration.¹⁷

The 1992-1997 Civil War in Tajikistan

Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and groups tried to take power. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons, about 80,000 of whom fled to Afghanistan. After the two sides agreed to a cease-fire, the U.N. Security Council established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994. In June 1997, Tajik President Rahmon and the late rebel leader Seyed Abdullo Nuri signed a *comprehensive peace agreement*. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, and UNMOT pulled out in May

¹⁶ Roger McDermott, *Eurasia Insight*, August 28, 2002.

¹⁷ Roger McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007*, Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation, October 2007; S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2007).

2000. To encourage the peace process, the United States initially pledged to help Tajikistan rebuild. Some observers point to events in the city of Andijon in Uzbekistan (see below) as indicating that conflicts similar to the Tajik civil war could engulf other regional states where large numbers of people are disenfranchised and poverty-stricken.

The Incursions into Kyrgyzstan

Several hundred Islamic extremists and others first invaded Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. Jama Namanganiy, the co-leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; see below), headed the largest guerrilla group. They seized hostages and several villages, allegedly seeking to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan.¹⁸ With Uzbek and Kazakh air and other support, Kyrgyz forces forced the guerrillas out in October 1999. Dozens of IMU and other insurgents again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 2000. Uzbekistan provided air and other support, but Kyrgyz forces were largely responsible for defeating the insurgents by late October 2000. The IMU did not invade the region in the summer before September 11, 2001, in part because bin Laden had secured its aid for a Taliban offensive against the Afghan Northern Alliance.

About a dozen alleged IMU members invaded from Tajikistan in May 2006 but soon were defeated (some escaped). After this, the Kyrgyz defense minister claimed that the IMU, HT, and other such groups increasingly menaced national security.

The 1999 and 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan

A series of explosions in Tashkent in February 1999 were among early signs that the Uzbek government was vulnerable to terrorism. By various reports, the explosions killed 16 to 28 and wounded 100 to 351 people. The aftermath involved wide-scale arrests of political dissidents and others deemed by some observers as unlikely conspirators. Karimov in April 1999 accused Mohammad Solikh (former Uzbek presidential candidate and head of the banned Erk Party) of masterminding what he termed an assassination plot, along with Tohir Yuldashev (co-leader of the IMU) and the Taliban. The first trial of 22 suspects in June resulted in six receiving death sentences. The suspects said in court that they received terrorist training in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Russia and were led by Solikh, Yuldashev and Namanganiy. In 2000, Yuldashev and Namanganiy received death sentences in absentia, and Solikh received a 15.5 year prison sentence. Solikh denied membership in IMU, and he and Yuldashev denied involvement in the bombings.

On March 28 through April 1, 2004, a series of bombings and armed attacks were launched in Uzbekistan, reportedly killing 47. An obscure Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan (IJG; Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami, a breakaway part of the IMU) claimed

¹⁸ According to Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante Cornell, the incursions of the IMU into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 were largely driven by efforts to secure drug trafficking routes. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Silk Road Paper, July 2006.

responsibility.¹⁹ In subsequent trials, the alleged attackers were accused of being members of IJG or of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT; an Islamic fundamentalist movement ostensibly pledged to peace but banned in Uzbekistan) and of attempting to overthrow the government. Some defendants testified that they were trained by Arabs and others at camps in Kazakhstan and Pakistan. They testified that IMU member Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov (convicted in absentia in 2000) was the leader of IJG, and linked him to Taliban head Mohammad Omar, Uighur extremist Abu Mohammad, and Osama bin Laden. On July 30, 2004, explosions occurred at the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office in Tashkent. The IMU and IJG claimed responsibility and stated that the bombings were aimed against Uzbek and other "apostate" governments. A Kazakh security official in late 2004 announced the apprehension of several IJG members. He alleged that the IJG had ties to Al Qaeda; had other cells in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia; and was planning assassinations.²⁰

Pakistan reported in November 2006 that it had arrested IJG members who had placed rockets near presidential offices, the legislature, and the headquarters of military intelligence in Islamabad. Reportedly, the IJG was targeting the government because of its support for the United States.²¹ Pakistani media reported in March-April 2007 that dozens of IMU members had been killed in northern Pakistan when local tribes turned against them, possibly reducing their strength or forcing them to move into Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU, aided by Afghanistan's Taliban and by Osama bin Laden, resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. The "main goal of the IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan," the State Department warned, and it linked the IMU to bombings and attacks on Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. IMU forces assisting the Taliban and Al Qaeda suffered major losses during coalition actions in Afghanistan, and Namanganiy was probably killed.²²

Former CIA Director Porter Goss testified in March 2005 that IJG "has become a more virulent threat to U.S. interests and local governments."²³ In May 2005, the State Department named IJG a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and in June, the U.N. Security Council added IJG to its terrorism list.²⁴ In June 2008, Jalolov and

¹⁹ The IJG changed its name to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in 2005. For consistency, the acronym IJG is used here.

²⁰ See also CRS Report RS21818, *The 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

²¹ *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, November 4, 2006.

²² U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, April 2004.

²³ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. *Testimony of the Director of Central Intelligence, The Honorable Porter J. Goss*, March 17, 2005.

²⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Press Statement: U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group Under Executive Order 13224*, May 26, 2005; U.N. Security Council.
(continued...)

his associate Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov were added to the U.N. 1267 Sanctions Committee's Consolidated List of individuals and entities associated with bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the Taliban, and the U.S. Treasury Department ordered that any of their assets under U.S. jurisdiction be frozen and prohibited U.S. citizens from financial dealings with the terrorists.²⁵

Officials in Germany arrested several individuals on September 5, 2007, on charges of planning explosions at the U.S. airbase at Ramstein, at U.S. and Uzbek diplomatic offices, and other targets in Germany. The IJG claimed responsibility and stated that it was targeting U.S. and Uzbek interests because of these countries' "brutal policies towards Muslims," and targeting Germany because it has a small military base in Termez, Uzbekistan, which is used to support NATO operations in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the suspects had received training at IMU and al Qaeda terrorist training camps in Pakistan. The suspects were part of a larger IJG branch in Germany of about 30 members. In U.S. Congressional testimony on September 10, 2007, John Redd, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, and Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, stated that U.S. communications intercepts shared with Germany had facilitated foiling the plot.

In January 2008, an IJG website seemed to indicate that an al Qaeda official — who had been killed by the United States — had been one of the leaders of the IJG. In March 2008, an IJG website claimed that one of its members had assisted Taliban forces in Afghanistan by carrying out a suicide bombing against U.S. troops.²⁶

The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan

Dozens or perhaps hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded on May 13, 2005, after Uzbek troops fired on demonstrators in the eastern town of Andijon. The protestors had gathered to demand the end of a trial of local businessmen charged with belonging to an Islamic terrorist group. The night before, a group stormed a prison where those on trial were held and released hundreds of inmates.²⁷ Many freed inmates then joined others in storming government buildings. President

²⁴ (...continued)

The Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee. *Press Release: Security Council Committee Adds One Entity to Al-Qaida Section of Consolidated List*, SC/8405, June 3, 2005.

²⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury. *Press Release: Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group*, June 18, 2008.

²⁶ Guido Steinberg, *A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism*, Center for Contemporary Conflict, 2008.

²⁷ There is a great deal of controversy about whether this group contained foreign-trained terrorists or was composed mainly of the friends and families of the accused. See U.S. Congress. Commission on Security and Cooperation In Europe. Briefing: The Uzbekistan Crisis. *Testimony of Galima Bukharbayeva, Correspondent. Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, June 29, 2005. For a contrasting assessment, see Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijon, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, July 2005; and AbduMannob Polat, *Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations*, Jamestown Foundation, June 2007.

Karimov flew to the city to direct operations, and reportedly had restored order by late on May 13.²⁸ On July 29, 439 people who had fled from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan were airlifted to Romania for resettlement processing, after the United States and others raised concerns that they might be tortured if returned to Uzbekistan.²⁹

The United States and others in the international community repeatedly have called for an international inquiry into events in Andijon, which the Uzbek government has rejected as violating its sovereignty. In November 2005, the EU Council approved a visa ban on twelve Uzbek officials it stated were “directly responsible for the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in Andijon and for the obstruction of an independent inquiry.” The Council also embargoed exports of “arms, military equipment, and other equipment that might be used for internal repression.”³⁰ The EU Council in November 2006 permitted some bilateral consultations to help Uzbekistan comply “with the principles of respect for human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms.” In October 2007, the EU Council suspended the visa ban for six months but left the arms embargo in place, and stated that it would re-evaluate the human rights situation in six months. In April 2008, the EU Council suspended the visa ban for another six months but left the arms embargo in place.³¹

At the first major trial of fifteen alleged perpetrators of the Andijon unrest in late 2005, the accused all confessed and asked for death penalties. They testified that they were members of Akramiya, a branch of HT launched in 1994 by Akram Yuldashev that aimed to use force to create a caliphate in the area of the Fergana Valley located in Uzbekistan. Besides receiving assistance from HT, Akramiya was alleged to receive financial aid and arms training from the IMU. The defendants also claimed that the U.S. and Kyrgyz governments helped finance and support their effort to overthrow the government, and that international media colluded with local human rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this effort. The U.S. and Kyrgyz governments denied involvement, and many observers criticized the trial as appearing stage-managed. Reportedly, 100 or more individuals have been arrested and sentenced, including some Uzbek opposition party members and media and NGO

²⁸ Analyst Adeeb Khalid draws a parallel between the Uzbek government’s actions at Andijon and at a large student demonstration in Tashkent in January 1992. In the latter case, Karimov allegedly ordered troops to fire on the marchers, resulting in up to six deaths and two dozen or more injuries. *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 155. See also Reuters, January 17, 1992.

²⁹ See also CRS Report RS22161, *Unrest in Andijon, Uzbekistan: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

³⁰ Council of the European Union. *Uzbekistan: Council Adopts Restrictive Measures*, Press Release 14392/05, November 14, 2005. U.S. officials argued that the United States already had been limiting military assistance — at congressional request — because of human rights abuses.

³¹ Council of the European Union. 2824th General Affairs Council Meeting. *Press Release*, 13720/07 (Presse 227), October 15-16, 2007; 2864th and 2865th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meetings. *Press Release*, 8619/08 (Presse 105), April 29, 2008.

representatives. Partly in response, Congress has amplified calls for conditioning aid to Uzbekistan on its democracy and human rights record (see below, *Legislation*).³²

Since the unrest in Andijon, Uzbekistan has closed down over 200 NGOs, many of them U.S.-based or U.S.-supported, on the grounds that they are involved in illegal activities. Some observers suggest that U.S.-Uzbek relations are thawing slightly in mid-2008.

Democratization and Human Rights

A major goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia has been to foster the long-term development of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Particularly since September 11, 2001, the United States has attempted to harmonize its concerns about democratization and human rights in the region with its interests in regional support for the Global War on Terrorism. According to some allegations, the Administration may have sent suspected terrorists in its custody to Uzbekistan for questioning, a process termed “extraordinary rendition.”³³ Although not verifying such transfers specifically to Uzbekistan, the Administration stated that, under the rendition policy, it received diplomatic assurances that transferees would not be tortured. Several citizens of Central Asian states who were held in U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base have been returned to their home countries.

Several of the Central Asian leaders have declared that they are committed to democratization. Despite such pledges, the states have made little progress, according to the State Department.³⁴ During Nazarbayev’s 1994 U.S. visit, he and then-President Clinton signed a Charter on Democratic Partnership that recognized Kazakhstan’s commitments to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic reform. During his December 2001 and September 2006 visits, Nazarbayev repeated these pledges in joint statements with President Bush. In March 2002, a U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration was signed pledging Uzbekistan to “intensify the democratic transformation” and improve freedom of the press. During his December 2002 U.S. visit, Tajikistan’s President Rahmon pledged to “expand fundamental freedoms and human rights.”

Until recently, almost all the leaders in Central Asia had been in place since before the breakup of the Soviet Union (the exception was the leader of Tajikistan,

³² OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). *Report from the OSCE/ODIHR Trial Monitoring in Uzbekistan*, April 21, 2006; Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Uzbekistan. *Comments on the Report Prepared by the OSCE ODIHR*, April 19, 2006.

³³ *The New Yorker*, February 14, 2005; *New York Times*, May 1, 2005; *New York Times*, December 31, 2005; Representative Edward Markey, *Congressional Record*, December 13, 2005, p. H11337; European Parliament. Temporary Committee on the Alleged Use of European Countries by the CIA for the Transport And Illegal Detention of Prisoners, *Draft Interim Report*, 2006/2027(INI), April 24, 2006; and *On the Testimony by Craig Murray, Former British Ambassador*, Working Document No. 5, June 1, 2006.

³⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*.

who had been ousted in the early 1990s during a civil war). These leaders long held onto power by orchestrating extensions of their terms, holding suspect elections, eliminating possible contenders, and providing emoluments to supporters and relatives. After this long period of leadership stability, President Akayev of Kyrgyzstan was toppled in a coup in 2005 (see below), and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan died in late 2006, marking the passing of three out of five Soviet-era regional leaders from the scene.

Possible scenarios of political futures in Central Asia have ranged from continued rule in most of the states by elite groups that became ensconced during the Soviet era to violent transitions to Islamic fundamentalist rule. Relatively peaceful and quick transitions to more or less democratic and Western-oriented political systems have been considered less likely by many observers. While some observers warn that Islamic extremism could increase dramatically in the region, others discount the risk that the existing secular governments soon will be overthrown by Islamic extremists.³⁵

In the case of the three succession transitions so far, Tajikistan's resulted in a shift in the Soviet-era regional/clan elite configuration and some limited inclusion of the Islamic Renaissance Party. Perhaps worrisome, Tajik President Rahmon has written a "spiritual guide" reminiscent of the one penned by Turkmenistan's late authoritarian president, and has given orders on how citizens should live and dress. It is perhaps too early to discern the outcome of transitions in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, but Kyrgyzstan's appears to involve power-sharing by Soviet-era regional/clan elites. The Kyrgyz government appears recently to be backsliding on democratization.³⁶ In Turkmenistan, it appears that Soviet-era elites have retained power and have eschewed meaningful democratization.

Recent Developments in Kazakhstan. Incumbent Kazakh President Nazarbayev won another term with 91% of the vote in a five-man race on December 4, 2005. Many observers credited economic growth in the country and promises of increased wages and pensions as bolstering his popularity. He campaigned widely and pledged democratic reforms and poverty relief. Observers from the OSCE, the Council of Europe (COE), and the European Parliament assessed the election as progressive but still falling short of a free and fair race. Problems included restrictions on campaigning and harassment of opposition candidates.³⁷ Then-Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs Daniel Fried averred that "in the case of ... countries whose elections were not free and fair but not a travesty — perhaps Kazakhstan is in that category — we need to be very clear about

³⁵ Analyst Adeeb Khalid argues that the elites and populations of the regional states still hold many attitudes and follow many practices imposed during the Soviet period of rule. This "Sovietism" makes it difficult for either Islamic extremism or democratization to make headway, he suggests. Khalid, p. 193. For a perhaps more troubling view of the threat of Islamic extremism, see above, *Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns*.

³⁶ Mark Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," *World Affairs*, Spring 2006, pp. 157-72.

³⁷ OSCE. ODIHR. Election Observation Mission. *Republic of Kazakhstan Presidential Election 4 December 2005: Final Report*, February 21, 2006.

what it is we want, which is democracy” and that the United States should continue engagement with such governments “as long as they are moving in roughly the right direction.”³⁸

President Nazarbayev proposed changes to the constitution on May 17, 2007, that he claimed would increase legislative power and boost democratization. He explained that after Kazakhstan gained independence, “the need to build Kazakh statehood and a market economy from scratch demanded [that] I assume all the responsibility.... But today, when the process of modernization of the country is irreversible ... the time has come [for] a new system of checks and balances.” The legislature approved the changes the next day. The changes include increasing the number of deputies in the Majilis and Senate, permitting the president to be active in a political party, and decreasing the president’s term in office from seven to five years (reversing a 1998 change from five to seven years). One change requires a two-thirds vote in each legislative chamber to override presidential alterations to approved bills. Another provision specifies that nine Majilis deputies are appointed by the People’s Assembly, which is mentioned in the constitution for the first time. An implementing Constitutional Act on Elections approved in June 2007 provides for electing the other 98 Majilis deputies by party lists.

Some critics considered that many of the changes were superficially reformist and perhaps aimed at convincing the OSCE that Kazakhstan was democratizing and should be granted its request to chair the OSCE in 2009. Other observers praised some of the changes as progressive if fully implemented, such as the requirement for a court order in case of detention or arrest. Perhaps indicating another reason for the changes, a legislative “initiative” excluded Nazarbayev from term limits. Visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher met with Kazakhstani officials in June 2007 and stated that “these constitutional amendments go in the right direction. The overall effect over the long term could be to strengthen political parties [and] the power of parliament. There have been concerns about the lifting of term limits on the president, but it remains to be seen how that will work out in the longer term. I think our overall view would be this is a step forward. It’s a good legal framework. It points the way to a stable, democratic system.”³⁹

Similar to the events of late 1993, deputies in Kazakhstan’s Majilis (the lower legislative chamber) on June 19, 2007, ostensibly requested that President Nursultan Nazarbayev cut short their terms and hold early elections. He acceded to the request the next day and the election was scheduled for August 18, 2007. As per constitutional amendments and election law changes, the size of the Majilis increased from 77 to 107 members. Ninety-eight members are elected by party lists and nine by the People’s Assembly (which is headed by the president). At the opening of the headquarters for the main pro-government party, Nur-Otan (Fatherland’s Ray of Light), on July 2, Nazarbayev appeared to endorse a predominant role for Nur-Otan

³⁸ “Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Addresses American Enterprise Institute,” *US Fed News*, December 14, 2005.

³⁹ U.S. Embassy, Astana, Kazakhstan. *Interview by Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A. Boucher with Aybek Aldabergenov of Era TV*, June 6, 2007.

when he allegedly claimed (erroneously) that since World War II, Japan has flourished under the one party rule of the Liberal Democrats. Seven parties were registered for the election, six of which are pro-government and one of which is an opposition party. Local legislative elections also took place, but these involved voting for individuals rather than party lists.

Nur-Otan reportedly received 88.05% of 8.87 million votes cast and won all 98 seats in the August 18, 2007, election. The other six parties running were unable to clear a 7% threshold needed to win seats. In a preliminary assessment, observers from the OSCE praised some positive aspects of the vote, but judged it as falling short of a free and fair race. They were critical of irregularities in counting ballots, a high vote hurdle for parties to win seats, the appointment of nine deputies, and no provision for candidates who were not party-affiliated to run. One Russian pundit observed that an ever-dwindling number of parties have won seats in legislative elections since Kazakhstan gained independence, and that now only the presidential party holds seats. On the other hand, U.S. analyst Ariel Cohen hailed “a relatively clean election that demonstrates high popular support.”⁴⁰

Although Kazakhstan lobbied extensively for holding the presidency of the OSCE in 2009, the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the OSCE at the end of November 2007 decided that Greece would hold the OSCE presidency in 2009, followed in 2010 by Kazakhstan. This decision was made despite the appearance in early November of the final report of the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which assessed Kazakhstan’s August legislative election as not meeting OSCE commitments (although the election was considered improved over previous races). Kazakhstan was among several CIS members that called in 2007 for restricting the scope of election observation by ODIHR. Also in late October 2007, Kazakh authorities were alleged to have closed down several independent newspapers and Internet sites. Deputy Assistant Secretary Feigenbaum in December 2007 stated that the Administration nonetheless had supported Kazakhstan’s presidency in 2010 as “a historic opportunity for Kazakhstan.... [It] is a chance, as Kazakhstan itself has said, to really meld, they say, East and West within the organization [and] to help create a ... sustainable institution for the long term.” He stressed that Kazakhstan at the Ministerial Meeting had pledged to uphold the mandate of ODIHR and to implement various democratization reforms by the end of 2008.⁴¹

The Coup in Kyrgyzstan. Demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan against a tainted legislative election and economic distress resulted in President Akayev’s relatively peaceful overthrow in March 2005. Some observers hailed this coup as the third so-called “democratic revolution” in Eurasia, after those in Georgia and Ukraine, and

⁴⁰ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections, 18 August 2007: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, October 30, 2007; Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), August 22, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950376; Ariel Cohen, “Kazakh Vote: A Step Forward,” *Washington Times*, August 21, 2007.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State. *Evan Feigenbaum ... Interview With Navbahor Imamova of Voice of America*, December 17, 2007.

the first in Central Asia. They suggested that the country, because of its slightly wider scope of civil liberties compared to the rest of Central Asia, might lead the region in democratic reforms. Other observers have cautioned that governmental corruption, institutional weakness, and pro-Russian overtures could jeopardize Kyrgyzstan's independence.⁴² In late October 2006, U.S. media reported that the U.S. FBI allegedly had determined that former President Akayev and his family had skimmed off Kyrgyz state assets, including U.S. payments for use of the Manas airbase.

Opposition politician and acting president Kurmanbek Bakiyev received 88.71% of about 2.0 million votes in a 7-person presidential election held on July 10, 2005. The OSCE stated that "fundamental civil and political rights were generally respected," but it raised concerns about "problematic" vote tabulation. In November and December 2006, conflict between the executive and legislative branches over the balance of powers resulted in the passage of successive constitutions, with President Bakiyev appearing to lose and then win back some presidential powers (for background, see CRS Report RL32864, *Coup in Kyrgyzstan: Developments and Implications*; and CRS Report RS22546, *Kyrgyzstan's Constitutional Crisis*, both by Jim Nichol).

In late September 2007, the pro-Bakiyev constitutional court invalidated all constitutional changes since the adoption of the 2003 constitution. Bakiyev announced a few days later that he was setting up and supporting a new political party, the Ak Dzhol People's Party. He then pushed through a snap referendum on October 21, 2007 on a draft constitution he unveiled that set forth strong presidential powers.⁴³ The next day, he dissolved the legislature and set new elections for December 16, 2007, a move many observers viewed as preventing opposition parties from carrying out effective campaigns during the short period of time.⁴⁴ Some of those who observed the vote on the new constitution alleged that many irregularities took place, and warned that similar problems might be repeated in the December election.

⁴² Analyst Matthew Fuhrmann, who was in Kyrgyzstan during the coup, states that it fundamentally was an action led by citizens who mobilized to replace what they viewed as a corrupt and undemocratic regime, and was not merely a clan-based or criminal-led effort. "A Tale of Two Social Capitals: Revolutionary Collective Action in Kyrgyzstan," *Problems of Post-Communism*, November/December 2006, pp. 16-29. Other observers suggest that the coup was more a clan-based shift of power than a spontaneous popular uprising. Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics*, January 2004, pp. 224-261; S. Frederick Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Silk Road Paper, June 2006.

⁴³ The Venice Commission concluded that the draft constitution placed an "excessive concentration of power in the hands of the president," so that "the powers of the president are almost unrestricted." The legislature "is not an effective counterweight." European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission). *Opinion on the Constitutional Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Opinion No. 457/2007, December 17, 2007.

⁴⁴ In a perhaps telling move, the Ak Dzhol Party placed Cholpon Bayekova, the chairwoman of the Constitutional Court, at the head of its party list.

Twelve parties were registered for the December 2007 election. The new constitution established a 90-seat legislature elected by party lists. A new election law stated that a party could not win seats unless it received 5% or more of the vote of all registered voters. Another provision stated that a party could not win seats unless it gained at least 0.5% of the vote in each region. This provision did not specify how the percentage was to be calculated, leading to controversy that was eventually settled by a Supreme Court decision.

Voting on election day was essentially peaceful. Initial results appeared to indicate that only Ak Dzul and Ata Mekan had surpassed the 5% hurdle, but that Ata Mekan might be disqualified because it had not received 0.5% of the vote in one region. On December 18, media initially reported that the Supreme Court had struck down the 0.5% hurdle, but it was later reported that the court had required a different means of calculation, which still resulted in Ata Mekan reputedly being disqualified. Finally, the CEC announced on December 19 that Ak Dzhul, the Social Democratic Party, and the Communist Party had surpassed the hurdles and had won seats in the legislature, and that Ata Mekan had been disqualified based on the amended 0.5% rule. The next day, the CEC declared that Ak Zhol had won 71 legislative seats, the Social Democrats 11 seats, and the Communists 8 seats, although it did not release final election results.

In its final report on the election, observers from the OSCE assessed the race as “fail[ing] to meet a number of OSCE commitments.... The elections were a missed opportunity, falling short of public expectations for the further consolidation of the democratic election process.” The observers “assessed the organization of the count as bad or very bad in 33 per cent of [polling stations observed], with implications for transparency and accountability of the process.” Although the observers fell short in declaring the results invalid, they stated that there were “serious irregularities and inconsistencies” in vote-counting, and that there was “questionable consistency” between reported preliminary and final results.⁴⁵

President Bakiyev moved quickly to convene the legislature on December 21. Among its first tasks, the legislature approved Igor Chudinov as prime minister, who claimed that his poor command of the Kyrgyz language thankfully insulated him from politics and allowed him to focus on economic development. In early May 2008, Bakiyev defended his rewriting of the constitution to confirm a strong presidency, maintaining that otherwise Kyrgyzstan would have descended into clan- and region-based civil war.⁴⁶

Recent Developments in Tajikistan. Five candidates ran in the presidential election in Tajikistan held on November 6, 2006, including incumbent President Rahmon. All the four “challengers” praised Rahmon and campaigned

⁴⁵ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. *Kyrgyz Republic Pre-Term Parliamentary Elections, 16 December 2007, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, April 24, 2008. Referring to the OSCE preliminary assessment, the State Department evinced “serious concerns” about the conduct of the election and called for reforms. U.S. Department of State. *Press Release*, December 21, 2007.

⁴⁶ CEDR, April 30, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950425; May 5, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950190.

little. The opposition Democratic and Social-Democratic Parties boycotted the race, claiming it was undemocratic, and the Islamic Renaissance Party chose not to field a candidate. Rahmon officially received 79.3% of 2.88 million votes with a nearly 91% turnout. According to OSCE and COE observers, the race was slightly improved over the 1999 presidential election but “did not fully test democratic electoral practices ... due to a lack of genuine choice and meaningful pluralism.” The observers criticized the lack of meaningful debate by the candidates, improbable turnout figures in some precincts, use of administrative resources, and non-transparent vote-counting.⁴⁷

Turkmanbashi’s Death and Succession. President Niyazov died on December 21, 2006, at age 66, ostensibly from a heart attack. The morning of his death, the government announced that deputy prime minister and health minister Gurbanguly Malikgulyyewic Berdimuhamedow would serve as acting president. The Halk Maslahaty (HM or People’s Council, a supreme legislative-executive-regional conclave) convened on December 26 and changed the constitution to make legitimate Berdimuhamedow’s position as acting president. It quickly approved an electoral law and announced that the next presidential election would be held on February 11, 2007.

The HM designated six candidates for the presidential election, one from each region, all of whom were government officials and members of the ruling Democratic Party. The ruling Democratic Party endorsed Berdimuhamedow as its candidate, thereby seemingly anointing him as Niyazov’s heir-apparent. Reportedly, 94% of 2.6 million voters turned out and 89.23% endorsed acting president Berdimuhamedow. A needs assessment mission from the OSCE visited Turkmenistan during the campaign. It praised some provisions of a new presidential election law, such as those permitting multiple candidacies and access by electoral observers, but criticized others, including those permitting only citizens approved by the legislature and who had served as state officials to run. A small delegation from the OSCE allegedly was not allowed to view the election vote-counting and one member reportedly termed the vote a “play” rather than “real” election. According to the U.S. State Department, the election “represent[ed] a modest step toward political electoral change that could help create the conditions in the future for a free, fair, open and truly competitive elections.”⁴⁸ Berdimuhamedow has not announced any fundamental policy changes, and some critics allege that there has been scant progress in democratization and respect for human rights.

Recent Developments in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek CEC in mid-November 2007 approved four candidates to run in the prospective December 23, 2007, presidential election. Incumbent President Islam Karimov was nominated by the Liberal Democratic Party, composed of leading businessmen. The party which Karimov once headed, the Popular Democratic Party, nominated its current head, Asliddin Rustamov. The Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party nominated its

⁴⁷ OSCE. ODIHR. *Presidential Election, Republic of Tajikistan — 6 November 2006: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*, November 7, 2006.

⁴⁸ CEDR, February 12, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950160. U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, February 15, 2007.

head, Dilorom Toshmuhammadova. A citizen's initiative committee nominated Akmal Saidov, chairman of the lower legislative chamber's Committee on Democratic Institutions.⁴⁹ The CEC disqualified the candidates nominated by the Milliy Taklanish and Fidokorlar parties at their conventions (the latter party had sponsored Karimov during his 2000 election), saying they had not gathered enough signatures. Although the Uzbek constitution bars a president from more than two terms, the Uzbek CEC argued that since the most recent constitution was approved in 1992, Karimov's "first term" should be considered as following his election in January 2000, and that he is eligible to run for a "second term" in December 2007.

According to an interim report by a small election observation mission sponsored by OSCE ODIHR, the Uzbek CEC and local electoral commissions controlled public appearances and spending by the candidates. There were no campaign debates and media coverage was minimal, according to OSCE ODIHR. Each presidential candidate used similar language to laud economic development and democratization under the incumbent president. State-owned media urged the electorate to vote for Karimov. According to the CEC, Karimov received 88% of 14.8 million votes with a 90.6% Turnout.⁵⁰ Each of the remaining three candidates received about 3% of the vote. The OSCE OHIDR election mission issued a press statement assessing the election as "generally fail[ing] to meet many OSCE commitments for democratic elections." Besides the problems noted above, others included lax rules regarding early voting, frequent voting by one member of a household for all members, and an observed low turnout.⁵¹ The Legislative Chamber (lower legislative house) of the Uzbek Supreme Assembly (Oliy Majlis) accepted Toshmuhammadova as its new speaker in January 2008, reputedly in line with President Karimov's pledges to give the legislature greater authority in the political system.

In his inaugural address on January 16, 2008, Karimov stated that the "historic election" might be remembered for centuries and thanked the citizenry "who gave me a massive vote of confidence by freely expressing their will [in an] election which was held in full compliance with our constitution and laws, international legal norms, and universally recognized democratic standards."⁵²

Human Rights. The NGO Freedom House has included Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan among countries such as North Korea and Myanmar that have the lowest

⁴⁹ The report of the legislative election in 2004 states that Saidov was a member of the Popular Democratic Party who was nominated by an independent group of voters. He headed the national center for supporting independent candidates. *CEDR*, January 10, 2005, Doc. No. CEP-224. The Uzbek CEC reported in late 2007 that he did not belong to a political party.

⁵⁰ The final vote turnout was reported two hours after the polls closed. Results that were termed "preliminary" were reported the next day (December 24), which were identical to "final" results reported on December 28.

⁵¹ OSCE. ODIHR. *Limited Election Observation Mission: Republic of Uzbekistan Presidential Election 2007, Interim Report*, December 15, 2007; *Press Release: Limited Election Observation Mission — Uzbekistan 2007*, December 24, 2007.

⁵² *CEDR*, January 16, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950404.

possible ratings on political rights and civil liberties.⁵³ Adherents to non-favored faiths, missionaries, and pious Muslims face religious rights abuses in all the states. Unfair elections increase political alienation and violence aimed against the regimes.

According to the State Department, religious freedom deteriorated in Uzbekistan in 2005-2006, with increased repression against Christians and observant Muslims.⁵⁴ As recommended by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Secretary Rice in November 2006 designated Uzbekistan a “country of particular concern” (CPC), where severe human rights violations could lead to U.S. sanctions. In June 2006, the State Department downgraded Uzbekistan to “Tier 3,” for having problems as a source country for human trafficking that does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so.⁵⁵

In the case of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, the State Department maintained that conditions there had improved somewhat in 2005-2006, because the Turkmen Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) was more willing to assist minority religious groups in dealing with the government, and authorities hosted a late 2005 roundtable discussion to inform religious leaders on registration procedures. The USCIRF in 2006 termed this State Department claim that religious freedom had improved “disturbing” and “startling” and recommended — as it had since 2000 — that Turkmenistan be designated a CPC, because the country “is among the most repressive states in the world today and engages in systematic and egregious violations of freedom of religion.” The USCIRF in May 2007 recommended that Turkmenistan be designated a CPC, despite the change in leadership, because reforms had not yet been implemented.⁵⁶

Among U.N. actions, the General Assembly in December 2003 and November 2004 approved resolutions expressing “grave concern” about human rights abuses in Turkmenistan and urging reforms. The U.N. Rapporteur on Torture in early 2003 completed a report that concluded that police and prison officials in Uzbekistan “systematically” employed torture.⁵⁷ In November 2005, the U.N. General

⁵³ Freedom House. *The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies*, September 6, 2006 and May 9, 2007.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*, September 15, 2006.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2006.

⁵⁶ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report*, May 3, 2006, and *Annual Report*, May 1, 2007. USCIRF first urged that Uzbekistan be designated a CPC in its 2005 *Annual Report*. *Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom John V. Hanford III on the Release of the State Department's 2006 Designations of Countries of Particular Concern for Severe Violations of Religious Freedom*, November 13, 2006.

⁵⁷ U.N. General Assembly. *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 58/194, December 22, 2003; *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 59/206, December 20, 2004. U.N. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Theo van Boven. *Report of the Special* (continued...)

Assembly's Third Committee approved resolutions critical of human rights violations in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The resolution on Turkmenistan expressed "grave concern" about political repression, media censorship, religious minority group harassment, and detainee torture. The resolution on Uzbekistan expressed "grave concern" about violence against civilians in Andijon and called on the government to permit an international investigation. The Uzbek representative asserted that the resolution contained no credible facts and ignored Uzbekistan's right to defend its constitutional order against terrorists.⁵⁸

In November 2007, the U.N. Committee Against Torture stated that it "remained concerned that [in Uzbekistan] there were numerous reports of abuses in custody, and many deaths, some of which were alleged to have followed torture or ill-treatment. The Committee was also concerned at the information received about the intimidation, restrictions and imprisonment of members of human rights monitoring organizations, human rights defenders and other civil society groups and the closing down of numerous national and international organizations...." The Committee called on Uzbekistan to strengthen its laws against torture and provide for impartial domestic and international monitoring of detention centers and prisons.⁵⁹

Security and Arms Control

The U.S.-led coalition's overthrow of the Taliban and routing of Al Qaeda and IMU terrorists in Afghanistan (termed Operation Enduring Freedom or OEF) increased the security of Central Asia. According to then-Assistant Secretary of Defense J. D. Crouch in testimony in June 2002, "our military relationships with each [Central Asian] nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11th." Crouch averred that "for the foreseeable future, U.S. defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats" and to build effective armed forces under civilian control. According to Crouch:

⁵⁷ (...continued)

Rapporteur Submitted in Accordance with Commission Resolution 2002/38. Addendum: Mission to Uzbekistan, E/CN.4/2003/68/Add.2, annex, February 3, 2003. U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Manfred Nowak. *Report by the Special Rapporteur. Addendum: Follow-up to the Recommendations Made by the Special Rapporteur*, E/CN.4/2006/6/Add.2, March 21, 2006.

⁵⁸ U.N. General Assembly. Third Committee. *Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, A/C.3/60/L.46, November 2, 2005; *Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Uzbekistan*, A/C.3/60/L.51, November 2, 2005; *Press Release: Third Committee ... Approves Text Expressing Deep Concern over Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan*, GA/SHC/3843, November 22, 2005.

⁵⁹ U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Committee Against Torture. *Press Release: Committee Against Torture Concludes Thirty-ninth Session*, November 23, 2007.

- Kyrgyzstan became a “critical regional partner” in OEF, providing basing for U.S. and coalition forces at Manas (in late 2007, U.S. and Spanish troops and personnel reportedly numbered about 1,200).
- Uzbekistan provided a base for U.S. operations at Karshi-Khanabad (K2; just before the pullout, U.S. troops reportedly numbered less than 900), a base for German units at Termez (in mid-2006, German troops reportedly numbered about 300), and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez.
- Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refueling (“gas-and-go”) and hosted a French force (in early 2008, French troops numbered 100-200).
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan provided overflight and other support.⁶⁰

To obtain Uzbekistan’s approval for basing, the 2002 U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration included a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirmed that “it would regard with grave concern any external threat” to Uzbekistan’s security and would consult with Uzbekistan “on an urgent basis” regarding a response. The two states pledged to intensify military cooperation, including “re-equipping the Armed Forces” of Uzbekistan, a pledge that appeared to be repudiated by Uzbekistan following events in Andijon.

Although U.S. security assistance was boosted in the aftermath of 9/11, such aid has lessened since then as a percentage of all such aid to Eurasia, particularly after aid to Uzbekistan was cut in FY2004 and subsequent years (see below). Security and law enforcement aid was 31% (\$188 million) of all such aid to Eurasia in FY2002, but had declined to 7.6% (\$111 million) in FY2006. Of all budgeted assistance to Central Asia over the period from FY1992-FY2006, security and law enforcement aid accounted for a little over one-fifth. Security and law enforcement aid includes Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programs and border security aid to combat trafficking in drugs, humans, and WMD. To help counter burgeoning drug trafficking from Afghanistan, emergency supplementals for FY2005 (P.L. 109-13) and FY2006 (P.L. 109-234) have provided some assistance to Central Asia, and the FY2008 baseline and supplemental request for the Defense Department called for about \$44.8 million in counter-narcotics aid for Central Asia.

In addition to the aid reported by the Coordinator’s Office, the Defense Department provides coalition support payments to Kyrgyzstan, including base lease

⁶⁰ Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. *Statement of J.D. Crouch II, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy*, June 27, 2002. India reportedly provided aid to revamp a Soviet-era base near Dushanbe, Tajikistan. *Xinhua General News Service*, February 27, 2007; *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, May 24, 2007; *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, September 20, 2007.

payments and landing and overflight fees (overall authority and funding have been provided in emergency supplemental appropriations for military operations and maintenance). According to one 2005 report, the United States had paid a total of \$28 million in landing fees, parking fees, and airport fees; \$114 million for fuel, and \$17 million to Kyrgyz contractors. Uzbekistan received a payment of \$15.7 million for use of K2 and associated services. On October 5, 2005, an amendment to Defense Appropriations for FY2006 (H.R. 2863) was approved in the Senate to place a one-year hold on Defense Department plans to pay another \$23 million. Despite this congressional concern, the Defense Department transferred the payment in November 2005. The conferees on H.R. 2863 later dropped the amendment (H.Rept. 109-360; P.L. 109-359).

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1999 became responsible for U.S. military engagement in Central Asia. It cooperates with the European Command (USEUCOM), on the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program (similar to the former Caspian [Sea] Guard program). Gen. Bantz Craddock, Commander of EUCOM, testified in 2008 that the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program coordinates security assistance provided by U.S. agencies to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. He stated that U.S. Naval Forces Europe cooperates with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command “to promote maritime safety and security and maritime domain awareness in the Caspian Sea.”⁶¹ Russia objects to the involvement of non-littoral countries in Caspian maritime security and has appeared to counter U.S. maritime security aid by boosting the capabilities of its Caspian Sea Flotilla and by urging the littoral states to coordinate their naval activities exclusively with Russia.

The Commander of USCENTCOM periodically visits the Central Asian states. During a visit to Kazakhstan in November 2007, then-Commander William Fallon discussed a new five-year military cooperation with Kazakhstan’s defense minister. The defense ministry praised the previous five-year plan for providing training for 200 troops in the United States, a number of High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (Humvees), the imminent delivery of two UH-1H Huey-2 helicopters, and the refurbishment of the base in Atyrau for the Western Military Command’s infantry battalion, among other cooperation. President Karimov hailed a visit by Fallon to Uzbekistan in January 2008 as a sign of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations. Fallon also visited Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in January 2008. In Tajikistan, he welcomed Tajik offers to help train Afghan military forces.

All the Central Asian states except Tajikistan joined NATO’s PFP by mid-1994 (Tajikistan joined in 2002). Central Asian troops have participated in periodic PFP (or “PFP-style”) exercises in the United States since 1995, and U.S. troops have participated in exercises in Central Asia since 1997. A June 2004 NATO summit communique pledged enhanced Alliance attention to the countries of the South

⁶¹ House of Representatives. Armed Services Committee. *Statement of General Bantz J. Craddock, Commander, United States European Command*, March 13, 2008. Caspian Sea Maritime Proliferation Prevention aid to Kazakhstan was \$4 million in FY2005, \$5 million in FY2006, and \$7 million in FY2007, and \$8 million was requested for each of FY2008 and FY2009. U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Threat Reduction Agency. *FY2008-FY2009 Budget Estimates: Former Soviet Union Threat Reduction*, February 2007.

Caucasus and Central Asia, and the NATO Secretary General appointed a Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Uzbekistan sharply reduced its participation in PFP after NATO raised concerns that Uzbek security forces had used excessive and disproportionate force in Andijon (however, it continued to permit Germany to use a base at Termez). Perhaps marking a turn-around in relations, President Karimov attended the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, in early April 2008 and stated that Uzbekistan was ready to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment by NATO through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. This issue was part of the agenda during Assistant Secretary Boucher's May 30-June 3, 2008, visit to Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan's progress in military reform enabled NATO in January 2006 to elevate it to participation in an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The NATO Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons, in April 2008 announced that Kazakhstan was making good progress in implementing the IPAP. Kazakhstan has stated that it does not plan to join NATO but wants to modernize its armed forces. In April 2008, Kazakhstan agreed to facilitate the railway shipment of non-lethal equipment and supplies from NATO countries to support operations in Afghanistan. Then-President Putin earlier had agreed with NATO to permit such shipments to cross Russia.

According to some reports, the Defense Department has been considering possibly setting up long-term military facilities in Central Asia termed Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs; they might contain pre-positioned equipment and be managed by private contractors, and few if any U.S. military personnel may be present). The Overseas Basing Commission in 2005 acknowledged that U.S. national security might be enhanced by future CSLs in Central Asia but urged Congress to seek inter-agency answers to "what constitutes vital U.S. interests in the area that would require long-term U.S. presence."⁶² According to former CENTCOM Commander Fallon, the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan is the Forward Operating Site (basing intended for rotational use by operating forces with limited U.S. military support presence and possibly pre-positioned equipment) for access to and operations in Central Asia. CENTCOM's FY2008 Master Plan for infrastructure requirements at its U.S. overseas military facilities reportedly placed a high priority on sustaining long-term access to locations across its area of responsibility.⁶³

Closure of Karshi-Khanabad

On July 5, 2005, the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed a declaration issued during a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation

⁶² Commission on Review of the Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States. *Interim Report*, May 9, 2005.

⁶³ House of Representatives. Appropriations Committee. Subcommittee on Military Construction. *Statement of Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander, U.S. Central Command, on Military Construction in U.S. Central Command*, April 17, 2007; General Accountability Office. *Defense Infrastructure: Overseas Master Plans Are Improving, but DOD Needs to Provide Congress Additional Information about the Military Buildup on Guam*, GAO Report No. GAO-07-1015, September 12, 2007.

Organization (SCO; see above, *Regional Tensions*) that stated that “as large-scale military operations against terrorism have come to an end in Afghanistan, the SCO member states maintain that the relevant parties to the anti-terrorist coalition should set a deadline for the temporary use of ... infrastructure facilities of the SCO member states and for their military presence in these countries.”⁶⁴ Despite this declaration, none of the Central Asian leaders immediately called for closing the coalition bases. However, after the United States and others interceded so that refugees who fled from Andijon to Kyrgyzstan could fly to Romania, Uzbekistan on July 29 demanded that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United States officially ceased operations to support Afghanistan at K2. Perhaps indicative of the reversal of U.S. military-to-military and other ties, former pro-U.S. defense minister Qodir Gulomov was convicted of treason and received seven years in prison, later suspended. Many K2 activities shifted to the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. In early 2006, Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly requested that lease payments for use of the Manas airbase be increased to more than \$200 million per year but at the same time re-affirmed Russia’s free use of its nearby base.⁶⁵

Some observers viewed the closure of K2 and souring U.S.-Uzbek relations as setbacks to U.S. influence in the region and as gains for Russian and Chinese influence. Others suggested that U.S. ties with other regional states provided continuing influence and that U.S. criticism of human rights abuses might pay future dividends among regional populations.⁶⁶

Possibly a sign of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, in early 2008 Uzbekistan reportedly permitted U.S. military personnel under NATO command, on a case-by-case basis, to transit through an airbase near the town of Termez that it has permitted Germany to operate as part of NATO peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan.⁶⁷ Similarly, during a visit to Uzbekistan in late May-early June 2008, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher discussed issues associated with Uzbekistan’s expressed willingness to facilitate the rail transit of non-lethal goods and equipment from NATO countries to support operations in Afghanistan. He praised some recent progress by the government in respecting human rights. President Karimov reportedly told Boucher that he was “pleased” about “positive changes in bilateral relations.”

On July 14, 2006, the United States and Kyrgyzstan issued a joint statement that the two sides had resolved the issue of the continued U.S. use of airbase facilities at

⁶⁴ CEDR, July 5, 2005, Doc. No. CPP-249.

⁶⁵ For background, see CRS Report RS22295, *Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol. Perhaps indicating Kyrgyz pressure on Russia to compensate for use of the base, Russia in October 2006 pledged grant military assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

⁶⁶ On growing Chinese regional influence, see Michael Mihalka, “Counter-insurgency, Counter-terrorism, State-Building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, May 2006.

⁶⁷ “U.S. Military Returns to Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan,” *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2008; “Only Germany Can Use Uzbek Bases Now,” *United Press International*, December 13, 2005.

Manas. Although not specifically mentioning U.S. basing payments, it was announced that the United States would provide \$150 million in “total assistance and compensation over the next year,” subject to congressional approval. Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Miroslav Niyazov and U.S. Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary James MacDougall also signed a Protocol of Intentions affirming that the United States would compensate the Kyrgyz government and businesses for goods, services, and support of coalition operations.

Some observers have suggested that a May 2006 terrorist incursion from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan and the more recent escalating Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan have contributed to a Kyrgyz evaluation that the U.S. coalition presence is still necessary. In September 2007, a U.S. military officer stated that the Manas airbase was moving toward “a sustainment posture,” with the replacement of virtually all tents and the building of aircraft maintenance, medical, and other facilities.⁶⁸ National defense authorizations for FY2008 and FY2009 legislate construction funding for the Manas airbase, including for building a parking area for heavy cargo aircraft (see below, **Legislation**). In June 2008, the outgoing U.S. commander at Manas reportedly stated that the United States pays Kyrgyzstan \$17.5 million annually for renting the land for the U.S. facilities, pays the Manas international airport about \$21 million per year in takeoff, landing, parking and other fees, and spends \$25 million annually for local construction materials and services. He also reportedly stated that during the past year over 130,000 troops, including 3,200 ISAF troops, transited through the base to Afghanistan, as well as hundreds of tons of cargo.⁶⁹

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Major U.S. security interests have included elimination of nuclear weapons remaining in Kazakhstan after the breakup of the Soviet Union and other efforts to control nuclear proliferation in Central Asia. The United States has tendered aid aimed at bolstering their export and physical controls over nuclear technology and materials, in part because of concerns that Iran is targeting these countries.

After the Soviet breakup, Kazakhstan was on paper a major nuclear weapons power (in reality Russia controlled these weapons). In December 1993, the United States and Kazakhstan signed a Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) umbrella agreement for the “safe and secure” dismantling of 104 SS-18s, the destruction of silos, and related purposes. All bombers and their air-launched cruise missiles were removed by late February 1994 (except seven bombers destroyed with U.S. aid in 1998). On April 21, 1995, the last of about 1,040 nuclear warheads had been removed from SS-18 missiles and transferred to Russia, and Kazakhstan announced that it was nuclear weapons-free. The SS-18s were eliminated by late 1994. The United States reported that 147 silos had been destroyed by September 1999. A U.S.-Kazakh Nuclear Risk Reduction Center in Almaty was set up to facilitate verification and compliance with arms control agreements to prevent the proliferation of WMD.

⁶⁸ Lt. Col. Michael Borgert, “Liberandos: Thank You for a Job Well Done,” 376th Expeditionary Services Squadron Public Affairs, September 9, 2007.

⁶⁹ *CEDR*, June 24, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950248.

Besides the Kazakh nuclear weapons, there are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and dozens of radioactive tailing and waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Many of these reportedly remain inadequately protected against theft. Kazakhstan is reported to possess one-fourth of the world's uranium reserves, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been among the world's top producers of low enriched uranium. Kazakhstan had a fast breeder reactor at Aktau that was the world's only nuclear desalinization facility. Shut down in 1999, it had nearly 300 metric tons of uranium and plutonium spent fuel in storage pools (three tons of which were weapons-grade). In 1997 and 1999, U.S.-Kazakh accords were signed on decommissioning the Aktau reactor.

CTR aid was used to facilitate transporting 600 kg of weapons-grade uranium from Kazakhstan to the United States in 1994, 2,900 kg of up to 26% enriched nuclear fuel from Aktau to Kazakhstan's Ulba facility in 2001 (which Ulba converted into less-enriched fuel), eleven kg of uranium in fuel rods from Uzbekistan to Russia in 2004, and 63 kg of uranium from Uzbekistan to Russia in April 2006.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan hosted major chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities during the Soviet era. CTR and Energy Department (DOE) funds have been used in Kazakhstan to dismantle a former anthrax production facility in Stepnogorsk, to remove some strains to the United States, to secure two other BW sites, and to retrain scientists. CTR funding was used to dismantle Uzbekistan's Nukus chemical weapons research facility. CTR aid also was used to eliminate active anthrax spores at a former CBW test site on an island in the Aral Sea. These latter two projects were completed in 2002. Other CTR aid helps keep former Uzbek CBW scientists employed in peaceful research. Uzbekistan has continued to cooperate with DOD and DOE — even after it restricted other ties with the United States in 2005 — to receive portal and hand-held radiation monitoring equipment and training.

Trade and Investment

The Administration and others stress that U.S. support for free market reforms directly serves U.S. national interests by opening new markets for U.S. goods and services and sources of energy and minerals. U.S. private investment committed to Central Asia has greatly exceeded that provided to Russia or most other Eurasian states except Azerbaijan. U.S. trade agreements have been signed and entered into force with all the Central Asian states, but bilateral investment treaties are in force only with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In line with Kyrgyzstan's accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States established permanent normal trade relations with Kyrgyzstan by law in June 2000, so that "Jackson-Vanik" trade provisions no longer apply that call for presidential reports and waivers concerning freedom of emigration.

In June 2004, The U.S. Trade Representative signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with ambassadors of the regional states to establish a U.S.-Central Asia Council on Trade and Investment. The Council meets yearly to address intellectual property, labor, environmental protection, and other issues that

impede trade and private investment flows between the United States and Central Asia. The Bush Administration at the annual meetings also has called for greater intra-regional cooperation on trade and encouraged the development of regional trade and transport ties with Afghanistan and South Asia. As stated by Secretary Rice, these efforts support a “new Silk Road, a great corridor of reform” extending from Europe southward to Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean. According to Evan Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, “we are ... promoting options and opportunities omni-directionally but increasingly to the south — the least developed direction.” The reorganization of the State Department in 2006 to create the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs facilitated this emphasis.⁷⁰

At the third annual meeting of the Council on Trade and Investment in mid-July 2007, Assistant Secretary of State Boucher and Deputy Assistant Secretary Feigenbaum stressed transport, electricity, and other links between South and Central Asia as well as U.S. private investment in the region.⁷¹ Major foci of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency’s Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative and USAID’s Regional Energy Market Assistance Program include encouraging energy, transportation, and communications projects, including the development of electrical power infrastructure and power sharing between Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eventually Pakistan and India.⁷²

All the states of the region possess large-scale resources that could contribute to the region becoming a “new silk road” of trade and commerce. The Kazakh and Turkmen economies are mostly geared to energy exports but need added foreign investment for production and transport. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are major cotton producers, a legacy of central economic planning during the Soviet period. Cotton production has contributed to environmental pollution and water shortages. Uzbekistan’s cotton and gold production rank among the highest in the world and much is exported. It has moderate gas reserves but needs investment to upgrade infrastructure. Kyrgyzstan has major gold mines and strategic mineral reserves, is a major wool producer, and could benefit from tourism. Tajikistan has

⁷⁰ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005; and U.S. Congress. House International Relations Committee. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. *Testimony by Steven R. Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary*, July 25, 2006. See also U.S. Embassy Kazakhstan. *Kazakhstan and the United States in a Changed World*, August 23, 2006.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of State. Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia. *Remarks at the South and Central Asia Regional Economic Integration Meeting*, July 18, 2007; Evan A. Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State South and Central Asian Affairs. *Remarks to Participants of the Third Annual Meeting of the U.S.-Central Asia Trade and Investment Framework Agreement*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, July 18, 2007.

⁷² U.S. Trade and Development Agency. *Press Release: USTDA Launches Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative*, October 14, 2005; Richard A. Boucher, *Remarks at Electricity Beyond Borders: A Central Asia Power Sector Forum*, Istanbul, Turkey, June 13, 2006; Joshua Kucera, “Washington Seeks to Steer Central Asian States Toward South Asian Allies,” *Eurasia Insight*, April 28, 2006; Joshua Kucera, “USAID Official Outlines Plan to Build Central-South Asian Electricity Links,” *Eurasia Insight*, May 4, 2006.

one of the world's largest aluminum processing plants. According to the IMF, the Central Asian countries exported \$37.9 billion in goods and services in 2006 and imported \$37.7 billion. Major export partners included Russia, China, Turkey, and Italy. Major import partners included Russia, China, Turkey, and Germany.⁷³

Despite the region's development potential, the challenges of corruption, inadequate transport infrastructure, punitive tariffs, border tensions, and uncertain respect for contracts discourage major foreign investment (except for some investment in the energy sector). Examples of such challenges include Uzbekistan's restrictions on land transit, which have encouraged Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to explore building a major road to Kazakhstan that bypasses Uzbekistan.

Tajikistan's economy has appeared to worsen in 2008, harmed by rampant corruption, rising inflation, and a harsh winter that contributed to a food crisis that necessitated international humanitarian assistance. In March 2008, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it was demanding the early repayment of some loans to Tajikistan. The reserves of the Tajik National Bank had been depleted in recent years by losses in the inefficient cotton-production sector, but the bank did not report these data to the IMF.

Oil and Natural Gas Resources

U.S. policy goals regarding energy resources in the Central Asian and South Caucasian states have included supporting their sovereignty and ties to the West, supporting U.S. private investment, promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers, assisting ally Turkey, and opposing the building of pipelines that transit "energy competitor" Iran or otherwise give it undue influence over the region. Security for Caspian region pipelines and energy resources also has been a recent interest. President Bush's 2001 *National Energy Policy* report suggested that greater oil production in the Caspian region could not only benefit regional economies, but also help mitigate possible world supply disruptions. It recommended U.S. support for building the BTC pipeline and an Azerbaijan-Turkey gas pipeline, coaxing Kazakhstan to use the oil pipeline, and otherwise encouraging the regional states to provide a stable and inviting business climate for energy development.⁷⁴

Until 2004, the Administration retained a Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy, who helped to further U.S. policy and counter the efforts of Russia's Viktor Kaluzhny, deputy foreign minister and Special Presidential Representative for Energy Matters in the Caspian. This responsibility came to be shifted at least in part to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs in 2005-2006 along with responsibilities of the former Special Negotiator for

⁷³ IMF. *Direction of Trade Statistics*, September 2007.

⁷⁴ The White House. *National Energy Policy*, May 2001. The BTC pipeline began delivering oil to Turkey's port of Ceyhan in mid-2006. The South Caucasus Pipeline was completed in early 2007.

Nagorno-Karabakh and Eurasian Conflicts.⁷⁵ Some critics have juxtaposed Russia's close interest in securing Caspian energy resources to what they term sporadic U.S. efforts.⁷⁶

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-140; signed into law on December 19, 2007) calls for the appointment of a Coordinator for International Energy Affairs under the Secretary of State to help develop and coordinate U.S. energy policy. In testimony on February 13, 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that "It is a really important part of diplomacy. In fact, I think I would go so far as to say that some of the politics of energy is warping diplomacy in certain parts of the world. And I do intend to appoint, and we are looking for, a special energy coordinator who could especially spend time on the Central Asian and Kazakh region."⁷⁷ On March 31, 2008, President Bush announced the nomination of Boyden Gray to be a special envoy for Eurasian energy issues.⁷⁸

The Caspian region is emerging as a notable source of oil and gas for world markets, although many experts emphasize that regional exports will constitute only a small fraction of world supplies. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the region's proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 232 trillion cubic feet (tcf), comparable to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁹ The region's proven oil reserves are estimated to be between 17-49 billion barrels, comparable to Qatar on the low end and Libya on the high end. Kazakhstan possesses the region's largest proven oil reserves at 9-40 billion barrels, according to DOE, and also possesses 65tcf of natural gas. Kazakhstan's oil exports currently are about 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd). Some U.S. energy firms and other private foreign investors have become discouraged in recent months by harsher Kazakh government terms, taxes, and fines that some

⁷⁵ In 2004, the Department of State's Inspector General recommended that the post of Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy might "now be phased out, with residual responsibilities folded into other units," because the purpose for which it was created was achieved. Office of the Inspector General. *Semiannual Report to the Congress, October 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004*. The Special Advisor's duties included "realizing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, in the launch of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) line, and a range of other Eurasian energy issues." Office of the Spokesman. *Press Release*, April 16, 2004.

⁷⁶ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, May 31, 2007.

⁷⁷ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Hearing on the FY2009 Budget: Foreign Relations*, February 13, 2008.

⁷⁸ In testimony in April 2008, Assistant Secretary Boucher claimed that the State Department recently had realized that there were "new opportunities" for the export of Caspian oil and gas, so that Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Mann had returned to work "full time" on Caspian energy diplomacy. House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment. Hearing on Central Asia. *Testimony by Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher*, April 8, 2008.

⁷⁹ Including the countries of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

allege reflect corruption within the ruling elite.⁸⁰ Turkmenistan possesses about 71 tcf and Uzbekistan about 66 tcf of proven gas reserves, according to DOE.⁸¹

Especially since Russia's temporary cutoff of gas to Ukraine in January 2006 highlighted European vulnerability, the United States has supported EU efforts to reduce its overall reliance on Russian oil and gas by increasing the number of possible alternative suppliers. Part of this policy has involved encouraging Central Asian countries to transport their energy exports to Europe through pipelines that cross the Caspian Sea, thereby bypassing Russian (and Iranian) territory, although these amounts are expected at most to satisfy only a tiny fraction of EU needs.⁸²

The Central Asian states have been pressured by Russia to yield large portions of their energy wealth to Russia, in part because Russia controls most existing export pipelines.⁸³ Russia attempted to strengthen this control over export routes for Central Asian energy in May 2007 when visiting former President Putin reached agreement in Kazakhstan on supplying more Kazakh oil to Russia. Putin also reached agreement with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia. The first agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and Turkish efforts to foster more oil exports through the BTC. The latter agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to link to the SCP to Turkey. The latter also appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a pipeline from Turkey through Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to Austria (the so-called Nabucco pipeline). Seeming to indicate a direct challenge to these plans by Russia and the West, China signed an agreement in August 2007 with Kazakhstan on completing the last section of an oil pipeline from the Caspian

⁸⁰ A perhaps troubling case concerns Kazakhstan's August 2007 suspension of the activities of the international consortium developing the Kashagan offshore oilfield. In January 2008, Kazakhstan and the consortium of companies developing Kashagan reached an agreement that permitted Kazakhstan to pay a below market price to increase its share to about 17% (making it the largest shareholder) and levied several billion dollars in fines against the consortium for delays. The start-up date for production is now set for 2011, although further delays might extend this to 2013 or even 2015. *Economist Intelligence Unit*, January 21, 2008. Visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary Mann reportedly hailed the resolution of the dispute over operations at Kashagan as a "positive solution" that permitted development of Kashagan to resume. *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, January 26, 2008.

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Caspian Sea Country Analysis Brief*, January 2007; *Caspian Sea Region: Survey of Key Oil and Gas Statistics and Forecasts*, July 2006.

⁸² For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also International Crisis Group. *Central Asia's Energy Risks*, May 24, 2007.

⁸³ According to a plan published by Russia's Institute of Energy Strategy covering the period 2007-2030, "Russian control over a large share of Central Asian gas needs to be maintained." See Minpromenergo (Ministry of Industry and Energy), Institut energeticheskoi strategii, *Kontseptsiya energeticheskoi strategii Rossii na period do 2030 g.*, 2007. As reported by Philip Hanson, "How Sustainable Is Russia's Energy Power?" *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 38 (2008).

seacoast to China, and signed an agreement with Turkmenistan on building a gas pipeline to China (see also below).⁸⁴

Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's main oil export route has been a 930-mile pipeline — owned by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), in which Russian shareholders have a controlling interest — that carries 234.56 million barrels per year of oil from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Lengthy Russian resistance to increasing the pumping capacity of the pipeline and demands for higher transit and other fees, along with the necessity of offloading the oil into tankers at Novorossiysk to transit the clogged Turkish Straits, spurred Kazakh President Nazarbayev to sign a treaty with visiting Azerbaijani President Aliyev in June 2006 to barge Kazakh oil across the Caspian Sea to Baku to the BTC pipeline. Up to 500,000 barrels per day of Kazakh oil from the Tengiz and Kashagan fields may transit through the BTC pipeline. Apparently to counter this plan, then-President Putin's May 2007 agreement with Nazarbayev (see above) envisaged boosting the capacity of the CPC pipeline. Despite this Russian pledge to increase the capacity of the CPC, Kazakhstan has proceeded to upgrade its Caspian Sea port facilities and in May 2008, the Kazakh legislature ratified the 2006 treaty. Kazakhstan also plans to barge some oil to Baku to ship by rail to Georgia's Black Sea port of Batumi, where Kazakhstan has made major port investments. From Batumi, the oil will be barged to the Romanian port of Constanta, to be processed at two Kazakh-owned refineries. Some Kazakh oil arriving in Baku also could be transported through a small pipeline to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, although in this latter case Kazakhstan might be faced with high transit charges by Russia.⁸⁵

Besides Kazakhstan's development of oil export routes to Europe not controlled by Russia, Kazakhstan and China have completed an oil pipeline from Atasu in central Kazakhstan to the Xinjiang region of China (a distance of about 597 miles). Kazakhstan began delivering oil through the pipeline in May 2006. Initial capacity is 146.6 million barrels per year. At Atasu, it links to another pipeline from the town of Kumkol, also in central Kazakhstan. On Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea border, China has finished construction of an oil pipeline from the port city of Atyrau eastward to the town of Kerkiyak. The last section of the route from the Caspian Sea to China, a link between the towns of Kerkiyak and Kumkol, began to be built in late 2007 and is expected to be completed in 2009.

In November 2007, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement permitting Russia to export 10.6 million barrels of oil per year from Atasu through the pipeline to China. This is the first Russian oil to be transported by pipeline to China.

Turkmenistan. The late President Niyazov signed a 25-year accord with then-President Putin in 2003 on supplying Russia up to 211.9 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas in 2004 (about 12% of production), rising up to 2.83 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in

⁸⁴ An oil and gas conference involving Kazakh, Chinese, and Russian energy ministries and firms has met annually since 2004 to "exchange views" on possible regional cooperation. *ITAR-TASS*, December 5, 2007.

⁸⁵ *ITAR-TASS*, May 29, 2008; *CEDR*, December 11, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950096; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950045.

2009-2028, perhaps then tying up most if not all of Turkmenistan's future production. Turkmenistan halted gas shipments to Russia at the end of 2004 in an attempt to get a higher gas price but settled for all-cash rather than partial barter payments. In early 2006, Turkmenistan again requested higher gas prices from Russia, because Russia's state-controlled Gazprom gas firm had raised the price it charged for customers receiving the gas that it had purchased from Turkmenistan. In early September 2006, Gazprom agreed to pay \$100 per 35.314 thousand cubic feet from 2007 to the end of 2009, and Turkmenistan pledged to supply 1.483 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in 2006, 1.765 tcf in 2007-2008, and 2.83 tcf from 2009-2028. In November 2007, however, Turkmenistan requested still another price increase, and the two sides agreed on a price of \$130 per 35.314 thousand cubic feet for the first half of 2008 and \$150 for the remainder of 2008, and a price thereafter based on "market principles."

Although the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan signed an accord with then-President Putin in May 2007 (mentioned above) on building a Caspian gas pipeline to Russia, a follow-on accord signed in December 2007 appeared to indicate waning support by these Central Asian states to the pipeline, according to some observers.

Seeking alternatives to pipeline routes through Russia, in December 1997 Turkmenistan opened the first pipeline from Central Asia to the outside world beyond Russia, a 125-mile gas pipeline linkage to Iran. Turkmenistan provided 282.5 bcf of gas to Iran in 2006 and reportedly a larger amount in 2007. At the end of 2007, however, Turkmenistan suddenly suspended gas shipments, causing hardship in northern Iran. The National Iranian Gas Company allegedly termed the suspension "immoral behavior," and Iranian legislators also criticized Turkmenistan. It was widely reported in Iranian media that Turkmen demands for higher payments were the main reason for the cut-off. This was denied by the Turkmen Foreign Ministry, although it accused Iran of payment arrearages, a charge in turn rejected by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.⁸⁶

As another alternative to pipelines through Russia, in early April 2006, Turkmenistan and China signed a framework agreement calling for Chinese investment in developing gas fields in Turkmenistan and in building a gas pipeline with a capacity of about 1.0 tcf per year through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. Follow-on accords were signed in August 2007, and construction of the gas pipeline reportedly began later that month, with completion anticipated in 2012.

Perhaps a further effort to diversify export routes, Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2008 with the EU to supply 353.1 bcf of gas per year starting in 2009, presumably through a trans-Caspian pipeline that might link to the SCP and to the proposed Nabucco pipeline. According to some analysts, an early trans-Caspian link could be built between offshore platforms belonging to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, which themselves are linked to shore. The issue of

⁸⁶ CEDR, January 22, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950327; January 24, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950304; *Iran: Daily Report*, January 21, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-11017 and Doc. No. IAP-950027; and January 24, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950014.

building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline was part of the agenda of visiting Assistant Secretary Boucher in late May 2008.

Some observers warn that Turkmenistan has pledged large amounts of gas to Russia, China, and other customers in coming years, although it is unclear whether production can be ramped up in a timely fashion to meet these pledges.

On March 11, 2008, the heads of the national gas companies of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan announced that their countries would raise the gas export price to the European level in 2009. They signed a memorandum of understanding on the price with Russia's Gazprom state-controlled gas firm, which controls most export pipelines. Negotiations on the price are underway, with Gazprom demanding that the price reflect transit costs and profit margins.

U.S. Aid Overview

For much of the 1990s and until September 11, 2001, the United States provided much more aid each year to Russia and Ukraine than to any Central Asian state (most such aid was funded from the FSA account in Foreign Operations Appropriations, but some derived from other program and agency budgets). Cumulative foreign aid budgeted to Central Asia for FY1992 through FY2005 amounted to \$3.8 billion, 13.6% of the amount budgeted to all the Eurasian states, reflecting the lesser priority given to these states prior to September 11.⁸⁷ Budgeted spending for FY2002 for Central Asia, during OEF, was greatly boosted in absolute amounts (\$584 million) and as a share of total aid to Eurasia (about one-quarter of such aid). The Administration's aid requests since then have gradually declined in absolute amounts, although it has continued to stress important U.S. interests in the region. The Administration has highlighted the phase-out of economic aid to Kazakhstan and restrictions on aid to Uzbekistan (see below) as among the reasons for declining aid requests. In April 2008, Assistant Secretary of State Boucher stated that another reason for declining U.S. aid to the region was a more constrained U.S. budgetary situation. Aid to Central Asia in recent years has been about the same or less in absolute and percentage terms than that provided to the South Caucasian region. (See **Table 1**).

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), created in 2004 to provide U.S. aid to countries with promising development records, announced in late 2005 that Kyrgyzstan was eligible to apply for assistance as a country on the "threshold" of meeting the criteria for full-scale development aid. On March 14, 2008, the MCC signed an agreement with Kyrgyzstan to provide \$16 million over the next two years to help the country combat corruption and bolster the rule of law. According to one

⁸⁷ In comparison, the EU has reported that it has provided approximately 1.39 billion euros (\$2.13 billion at current exchange rates) in assistance to the region since 1991. Its planned aid of about \$1 billion in 2007-2013 may prove to be more than projected U.S. aid to the region. European Community. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12.

report, the signing of the agreement had been delayed over U.S. concerns over non-transparency of the vote count in the December 2007 Kyrgyz legislative election (see above).⁸⁸

At the end of January 2008, the Tajik government declared a humanitarian crisis and asked the United Nations for assistance. Severe winter weather and electricity, gas, and food shortages contributed to what the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs declared to be an emergency that reportedly resulted in a number of deaths. The U.S. State Department announced in mid-February that it was boosting fuel and food aid by \$2.5 million.

Congressional Conditions on Kazakh and Uzbek Aid. In Congress, Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 (P.L. 108-7) forbade FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it was making substantial progress in meeting commitments under the Strategic Partnership Declaration to democratize and respect human rights. The act also forbade assistance to the Kazakh government unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it significantly had improved its human rights record during the preceding six months. However, the legislation permitted the Secretary to waive the requirement on national security grounds.⁸⁹ The Secretary reported in May 2003, that Uzbekistan was making such progress (by late 2003, the Administration had decided that it could no longer make this claim; see above, *Weapons of Mass Destruction*). In July 2003, the Secretary reported that Kazakhstan was making progress. Some in Congress were critical of these findings.

Consolidated Appropriations for FY2004, including foreign operations (P.L. 108-199) and for FY2005 (P.L. 108-447, Section 578), and Foreign Operations Appropriations for FY2006 (P.L. 109-102, Sections 586 and 587) retained these conditions, while clarifying that the prohibition on aid to Uzbekistan pertained to the *central* government and that conditions included respecting human rights, establishing a “genuine” multi-party system, and ensuring free and fair elections and freedom of expression and media. These conditions remained in place under the continuing resolution for FY2007 (P.L. 109-289, as amended; see above) and in appropriations for FY2008 (Secs. 685 [Uzbekistan] and 698 [Kazakhstan]; P.L. 110-161).

State Department Implementation in FY2004. In July 2004, the State Department announced that, despite some “encouraging progress” in respecting human rights, up to \$18 million in aid to Uzbekistan might be withheld because of “lack of progress on democratic reform and restrictions put on U.S. assistance

⁸⁸ *ITAR-TASS*, March 18, 2008.

⁸⁹ The language calling for “substantial progress” in respecting human rights differs from the grounds of ineligibility for assistance under Section 498(b) of Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), which includes as grounds a presidential determination that a Soviet successor state has “engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” The Administration has stated annually that the president has not determined that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in “gross violations” of human rights.

partners on the ground” (in contrast, progress was reported regarding Kazakhstan).⁹⁰ This determination potentially affected IMET and FMF programs as well as FREEDOM Support Act funding, since legislative provisions condition IMET and FMF on respect for human rights.⁹¹ The State Department reprogrammed or used notwithstanding authority (after consultation with Congress) to expend some of the funds, so that about \$8.5 million was ultimately withheld. Notwithstanding authority was used for funding health care reforms, promoting better treatment of detainees, combating HIV/AIDS, combating trafficking in drugs and persons, and supporting World Trade Organization accession. During an August 2004 visit to Uzbekistan, Gen. Myers criticized the cutoff of IMET and FMF programs as “shortsighted” and not “productive,” since it reduced U.S. military influence (see also above, *Weapons of Mass Destruction*).⁹²

State Department Implementation in FY2005. For FY2005, Secretary of State Rice reported to Congress in May 2005 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record, but that she had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. The Secretary of State in FY2005 did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so Section 578 aid restrictions remained in place. The State Department reported that it used notwithstanding authority to allocate \$4.16 million in FREEDOM Support Act aid to Uzbekistan to continue the same programs it used the authority for in FY2004.⁹³

State Department Implementation in FY2006. For FY2006, Secretary of State Rice reported to Congress in May 2006 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that she had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. She did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so Section 586 restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the

⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State. Office of the Spokesman. *Secretary of State Decision Not to Certify Uzbekistan*, July 13, 2004.

⁹¹ Sec.502B of Part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195) states that “no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” Sec.502B also specifies that IMET cannot be provided “to a country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights,” unless the President certifies in writing that extraordinary circumstances exist warranting the provision of IMET. Notwithstanding authority is provided for the president to furnish security assistance if there is “significant improvement” in a government’s human rights record. Some IMET and FMF was provided to Uzbekistan in FY2004. See U.S. Departments of Defense and State. *Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, FY2004-FY2005*, April 2005.

⁹² *Defense and Foreign Affairs Daily*, August 16, 2004.

⁹³ Some IMET aid was provided to Uzbekistan in FY2005. See U.S. Departments of Defense and State. *Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, FY2005-FY2006*, September 2006. For FY2006, no IMET aid was provided to Uzbekistan, but three Uzbeks received military training through other Defense Department programs. *Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, FY2006-FY2007*, August 2007.

affected programs that did not receive funding). The State Department repeated its FY2005 statement that it used notwithstanding authority to allocate \$4.16 million in FREEDOM Support Act aid to Uzbekistan in FY2006.

State Department Implementation in FY2007. Operating under the direction of the continuing resolution (P.L. 109-289, as amended), the Secretary of State reported to Congress in April 2007 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that she had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. She did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so Section 586 restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).

State Department Implementation in FY2008. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte reported to Congress in late February 2008 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that he had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).

Besides bilateral and regional aid, the United States contributes to international financial institutions that aid Central Asia. Recurrent policy issues regarding U.S. aid include what it should be used for, who should receive it, and whether it is effective.

110th Congress Legislation

P.L. 110-53, H.R. 1 (Bennie Thompson)

Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007. Introduced on January 5, 2007. Passed the House on January 9, 2007. Passed the Senate with an amendment in the nature of a substitute on July 9, 2007. Conference report (H.Rept. 110-259) agreed to in the Senate on July 26 and in the House on July 27. Signed into law on August 3, 2007 (P.L. 110-53). Sec. 1811 repeals specified restrictions on the use of Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program funds and activities. Title 21 calls for the executive branch to promote democratization and respect for human rights in nondemocratic and democratic transition countries. Sec. 2033 calls for expanding scholarship, exchange, and library programs in predominantly Muslim countries to enhance respect for democracy and human rights.

S. 198 (Nunn)

Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2007. Introduced on January 8, 2007; referred to the Committee on Armed Services and the Foreign Relations Committee. Amends the Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act of 1991, the Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 1993, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 to repeal specified restrictions on the use of Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program funds and activities. Amends the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992 to make specified funding requirements respecting independent

countries of the former Soviet Union inapplicable to CTR programs. Similar language was incorporated into H.R. 1 (see above).

S. 328 (Menendez)

Ensuring Implementation of the 9/11 Commission Report Act. Introduced on January 17, 2007. Sec. 324 contains language similar to that in S. 198 (above).

P.L. 110-181, H.R. 4986 (Skelton)

National Defense Authorization Act for FY2008. Introduced on January 16, 2008. Signed into law on January 28, 2008. Sec. 2903 authorizes \$30.3 million for the Air Force for military construction at the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan.

P.L. 110-161, H.R. 2764 (Lowey)

Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008. On December 17, 2007, the House considered two amendments to H.R. 2764 as received from the Senate. The first amendment inserted a Consolidated Appropriations Act covering 11 regular appropriations bills, including Division J: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. The second amendment dealt with emergency supplemental military funding. Agreed to in the House on December 17, 2007. The Senate offered an amendment to House amendment 2, and concurred with House amendment 1. On December 19, the message on the Senate action was received in the House. The House agreed with the Senate amendment to the House amendment 2, and the bill was cleared for the White House. Signed into law on December 26, 2007. Provides \$83.224 million in Freedom Support Act assistance for Central Asia.

Sec. 685 calls for assistance to be provided for the central government of Uzbekistan only if the Secretary of State reports that Uzbekistan is making substantial and continuing progress in meeting its commitments under the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, including respect for human rights, establishing a multi-party system, ensuring free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and the independence of the media, and that the government is supporting a credible international investigation of events in Andijon. Assistance includes excess defense articles. Provides that if the Secretary of State has credible evidence that Uzbek officials may be linked to the "deliberate killings of civilians in Andijon ... or for other gross violations of human rights," these individuals shall be ineligible for admission to the United States. The Secretary may waive this ineligibility if admission is necessary to attend the United Nations or to further U.S. law enforcement. Sec. 698 on Central Asia directs that assistance may be provided to the Kazakh government only if the Secretary of State reports that Kazakhstan has made significant improvements in the protection of human rights. A national security waiver is provided. The Secretary is to provide a report at the end of the fiscal year describing the defense aid and financial services provided to (and how they were used by) the Central Asian states during the fiscal year.

H.R. 2869 (Pitts)

The Central Asia Education Enhancement Act of 2007. Introduced on June 26, 2007; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Establishes a pilot program of fifty Central Asian scholarships in each of the fiscal years FY2008-FY2010 for undergraduate and graduate level public policy internships in the United States.

H.R. 5658 (Skelton)/S. 2787 (Levin)

National Defense Authorization Act for FY2009. Introduced in the House and the Senate on March 31, 2008. House version passed on May 22, 2008. Sec. 2301 authorizes \$6 million for the Air Force for military construction at the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan.

**Table 1. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Central Asia,
FY1992 to FY2008**
(millions of dollars)

Central Asian Country	FY1992 thru FY2005 Budgeted ^a	FY2006 Budgeted ^a	FY2007 Budgeted ^a	FY2008 Estimate ^b	FY2009 Request ^b
Kazakhstan	1,244.8	80.16	146.29	25.191	21.948
Kyrgyzstan	806.5	43.29	54.41	32.626	29.608
Tajikistan	679.7	44.84	46.71	31.914	28.582
Turkmenistan	255.4	10.44	19.84	9.149	11.504
Uzbekistan	760.9	49.30	35.21	10.19	7.94
Regional	73.2	4.83	7.59	2.976	6.607
Total	3,820.5	232.86	310.05	112.046	106.189
Percent	14	12	15	24	25

Sources: State Department, *Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia*, information as of January 9, 2008; *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2009: South and Central Asia*.

- a. FSA and Agency funds. Excludes some classified coalition support funding.
b. FSA and other Function 150 funds, including Peace Corps. Does not include Defense or Energy Department funds, funding for exchanges, or Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to Kyrgyzstan.

Figure 1. Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (08/02 M. Chin)